1: Maes--61 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Sakata FO43

Fishing

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226 Near rivers, swamps, and lakes, fishing is one of the principal occupations of the native.

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[462] Unlike hunting which is practiced only by men, fishing is done by both men and women. The latter, however, practice it only occasionally and fish only by damming up part of a river bed or marsh. The dam is usually built during the rainy season, but as long as the water is rising, the women leave all the sluices wide open. Toward the end of the rainy season, they narrow the drain channels and set large traps before the openings. These traps

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226 are attached to strong wooden stakes on the shore near the dam.
●285 The traps are made of splints from the ribs of raffia leaves and are plaited in openwork with the open spaces varying in size. The exterior form is always the same. Cylindrical at one end [85] and the other end closed along the diameter, the trap resembles a large cone ending in a line at the top. These traps

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Fig. 52. Making a Fish Trap among the Wadia and Tumba.

are built over a framework made of two, three, or four hoops. Their diameters vary according to their positions. They are set inside the trap, the largest one at the base, the smallest one toward the upper end. The transverse elements, doubled and woven alternately in and out, are spaced 10 to 15 centimeters apart and are usually made of strips of rattan. The inner trap, or entry trap, is plaited in the shape of a broad fan, conical

in form, with an ellipsoidal base. The open top is the entrance hole. The ends of the splints overlap somewhat on the inside in order to prevent the trapped fish from retracing their paths and escaping. 226 285

These traps are made only by men. When the plaiting is done, the work is flat, and then the finished latticework is fastened to the frame. [462]

The trap is opened by detaching the binding that closes the top.

As the waters recede, a woman lowers the trap. Morning and evening she comes to inspect it and to gather the captured fish. [86] 226

When the waters have fully subsided, the women assemble and go up the river or into the swamp. Standing across the full width of the watercourse, they walk down, chasing before them the fish that remained in the dammed-off area. They make an ear-

[226 285]

Fig. 53. Fish Traps used by the Peoples of Lake Leopold II.

shattering din, slapping the water with broad sticks or churning it with arms and legs. The hunted and terrified fish flee wildly only to be caught eventually in the trap. If they try to break through the line of women, the latter do not hesitate to grab and fling them on the bank. [Ed., the text is not translated from the second paragraph, page 86, to the second paragraph, page 87.]

226 chikwangue [Ed., manioc cake] or an earthworm is fastened to the hook, and everything is thrown into the water. Under the pressure of the current, the lines are drawn out and lie parallel to each other, held at one end by the large rope stretched over the water. A fish, attracted by the bait, seizes it and swallows it along with the hook, which remains in the stomach. All its efforts to free itself merely hooks the fish more securely. The native inspects the rope four

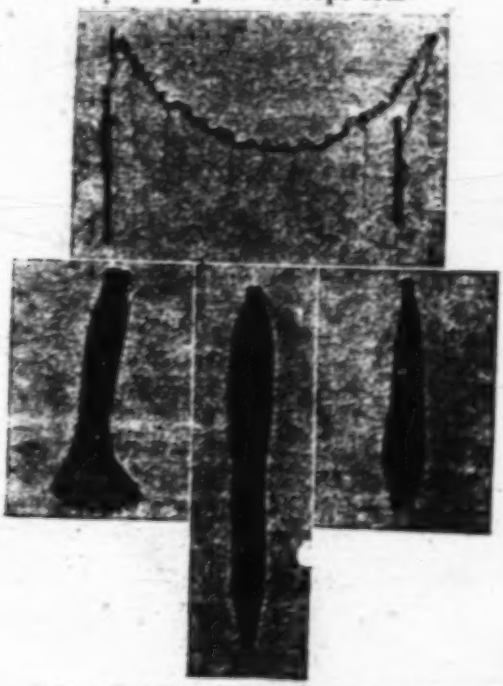

Fig. 54. Fish Traps and Lines, Lake Leopold II.

or five times during the day and pulls in the lines one by one. The hooked fish is cut loose by severing the string from the hook; it is gutted and thrown into the canoe. [90] The hook is replaced with one held in reserve until the first one is recovered while cleaning the catch.

The native also fishes with a line on the bottom and an inert line without a float. The hook is larger and usually made of iron. The strong rope is coated with oil to make

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the outside, bristles with spikes pointed toward the interior, which prevent the fish from leaving the trap. The shape of the traps for small fish is long, tubular, and narrow. They open at one end, and the entrance with spikes is set toward the middle of the trap. The traps for big fish have the shape of a truncated cone, with the top forming a straight line. The entrance, constructed on the same principle as that of the small traps, is set in the forward part, opening toward the interior. These traps are placed in front of the drain channels of dammed-up marshes and rivers.

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5) Fishing with a trap, usually set in waters with a strong current. The trap is in the shape of a cone, its movable base serving as a lid and its tip extended by a strong, flexible strip of rattan which acts as a spring. A liana is attached to the end of the rattan. A free-swinging, trapeze-like apparatus is tied to the body of the trap. The bait is attached to a rattan splint inside the trap. This splint is tied to a small, mobile crossbar on

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Fig. 55. Making a Fish Trap among the Bobaie.

the trapeze. The liana tied to the end of the rattan spring is drawn inside the trap through one of the openings near the supporting hoop of the entrance and is attached to the movable lid. The trap is constructed in such a way that when it is not set, the lid is closed by the pull of the rattan spring. To set the trap, the native ties toward the middle of the liana a rattan splint to which a small stick is attached. The end (A) of the latter passes behind

M 226 ● 285 the bar of the trapeze, and the point (B) is caught behind the mobile crossbar (C). To the latter the native ties a rattan splint, at the end of which he fastens the bait. This consists of a palm nut still covered with pulp. To reach the bait, the fish enters the trap; it takes the bait, pulls on it, and dislodges the triggering

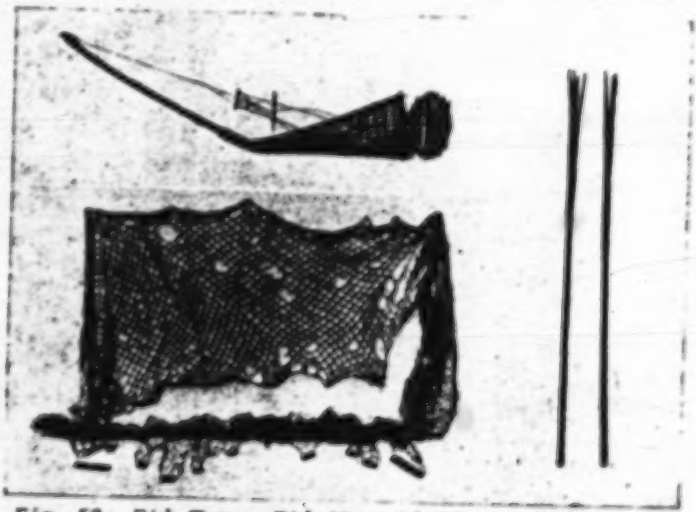

Fig. 56. Fish Trap. Fish Net with Floats. Fishing Harpoons from Lake Leopold II.

crossbar (C). The catches (A) and (B) are freed, the rattan spring is released, and the lid closes, trapping the fish. [93]

M 226 685 In individual fishing, the fish belong to the owner of the trap or to the person who set it. The native respects this right, and, moreover, custom punishes offenses very severely. Native law is rigorous to the point that a man caught red-handed in theft is liable to be driven from the community.

M 226 The yield from individual fishing is of hardly any importance. This kind of fishing is practiced only to vary the diet a little, and it is successful only because of the tremendous abundance of fish in these rivers.

M 5 226 Communal fishing is much more productive. Certain tribes, or to be more exact, certain families among the peoples of the Fimi, Lake Leopold II, and the lower Lukenie make a veritable

S M 25 The average height is 1.25 meters, the width 2.50 meters, and the length five to ten meters. The women maintain a fire under this smoking-drying apparatus night and day. It is fed with grass and other rubbish, which are not very dry so that a great deal of smoke will be produced. All the fish are turned over twice a day. After eight to ten days the operation is finished. The dried, smoked fish are carefully wrapped after being sorted and graded according to size. Part of the fish will make up the family reserve, and the rest will be used as trade goods. When the grid

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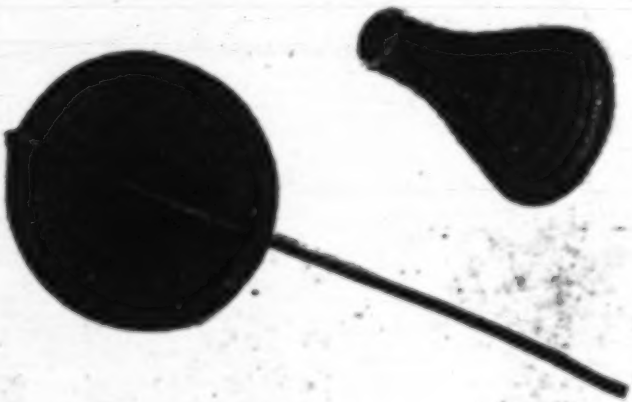

Fig. 57. Baskets for Fishing, Lake Leopold II.

is almost empty, the men go up the river and start fishing again.

S M 226 It is difficult to realize the magnitude of this industry and the unbelievable quantities of fish caught by the natives during their sojourn in the region of the salt grass. We watched one of these miraculous hauls one day, organized through the kind cooperation of Mr. Molin. The river had been dammed for only one night, the natives went up it only 150 [97] meters, this in the middle of the dry season, and yet they brought back four large baskets full of fish.

S M [623] The catch from communal fishing is shared at the end of the season. A part is reserved for the chief, the owners of the screens receive a special share, and the rest is divided among all the members of the group participating in the enterprise. [Ed., a

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sexual relations are strictly forbidden between the head of the family and the woman in charge of the burning.

When the last sprig is burned, the fire extinguished, and the ashes cold, the women heap them in large baskets.

Meanwhile the head of the family has made a sort of large funnel out of broad and tough rattan splints, bound with fine thongs of raffia stems and lianas. These funnels vary between two and three meters in height. The diameter of the large opening is one and a half to two meters. The bottom is formed by the cluster of rattan splints, roughly tied with a broad rattan thong. This funnel is placed upright between three or four sticks planted in the ground. An earthenware jar is placed under the funnel. The women line the inside of the funnel with banana leaves, placed on top of each other in such a way as to make the sides completely [109] waterproof. They next pour the ashes from the incineration into the funnel, pressing and squeezing them as much as possible.

When the funnel is three-fourths full, the woman draws about ten pots of water, or about 50 liters, and pours them over the ashes. This water takes two or sometimes three days to spread through the ashes. When the ashes are saturated, the woman pours two or three more pots of water into the funnel. From then on there is a slow drain of water, strongly salted from the dissolution of the soluble alkaline matter contained in the ashes. The water is caught in the earthenware jar under the funnel. The woman thus obtains four or five pots of a strong salt solution and two pots of water less saturated with salt. After putting aside her six or seven pots of salt water, the woman lights a fire and puts one or several earthenware bowls over it. Into these, little by little, she pours the strong salt solution, which she allows to boil.

When the water evaporates, the first salt deposit forms on the bottom and sides of the bowl.

The heat from these evaporation hearths is so intense that it is impossible to come near them. The woman therefore carefully provides herself with two long ladles to refill the bowls at a distance as the evaporation progresses. The whole lot is left on the fire until all the salt water is evaporated. Even after the evaporation is completed, the woman leaves the jar over the fire, which she stokes, so as to completely dry and solidify the salt deposit. This

the ngula stands before the apparatus. The mixture of water, ngula dust, and a few grains of sand falls into the storage basin as the work progresses. When the stock is large enough, the native plaits small baskets having the shape of a truncated cone and an average capacity of one cubic decimeter. The ngula paste is packed into these baskets, and the lot is then hung under the shelter out of the sun. At the end of a few days the paste is dry. The molded cone of ngula is taken from the mold, wrapped in banana leaves, and

Fig. 92. A Batua Chief Inongo, with a Rope Headdress.

carefully tied with rattan thongs, bamboo splints, or raffia fibers.

The family supply is usually left in the storage basins of the devices for making ngula; all the molded cakes are sold at outside markets.

The baskets used as ngula molds are all plaited in the same way. Four rattan thongs are laid in a row across four others, without being interlaced or plaited at the points where they cross. This forms the bottom of the basket. The thongs are lifted up at the four

sides of this square and held in place by a binding of twisted raffia fibers. The sides are then plaited by the simplest method, that is, with the horizontal band weaving in and out of the vertical thongs. As all of these molds always have approximately the same height and diameter, the ngula cones are both similar in shape and quite constant in weight. The natives use them a great deal as trade goods. In some regions the ngula cone has become a veritable currency, with a standard value from one tribe to another. [170] A market is organized regularly when steamers call at Mushie, and there the people of the interior exchange the products of their industries for the imported objects brought by the Blacks who work for the Whites. Ngula cones are among the principal items of trade and bring a very high price. In the Oshwe region, the old chief Kua Kua was a great ngula trader. He came by regularly with four or five of his wives, bringing various products from the region between the Kasai and the Lukenie to exchange for the ngula made in the Lokoro region.

Throughout the central Congo regions, the ngula used for trade has the shape of an elongated truncated cone. Among the Basongo-Meno and farther east, on the other hand, ngula most often is shaped in a ball. The native of these regions often uses it to decorate his pottery and wooden objects and to dye the fibers of cloth used for decoration. He keeps it in cosmetic boxes carved from takula wood and usually decorated with very artistic designs. He also uses it to color his hair. [Ed., a passage from the middle of page 170 to the last paragraph, page 171, is omitted.]

[171] Aside from ngula, the native sometimes smears his body with a type of white clay quite frequently found in the river beds. [172] The native calls it mpembe. Its use is far from being as widespread as that of ngula, and we believe that the native associates it with magic power rather than ornamentation. Mpembe is used chiefly by the peoples of the Congo-Kasai, Lake Leopold II, and Lukenie regions, up to the region of the Batitu.

We never saw a native smear his whole body with it. The few women in mourning that we saw were covered with a grayish-yellow mud and not with mpembe. We believe, moreover, that the use of mpembe is reserved to the chief, his wives, and perhaps

562 clothing and dressed her in valuable furs, especially in part of the
556 pelt of a striped antelope called mpangá. In some villages she was permitted to wear leopardskin in front as well as in back.

Then the father would decree (-bɛ́kya) that since his daughter
[582] had become bolímbɔ́ she would always wear furs and would stop working, and that she would be given in marriage only to a very rich and influential man, not to the first comer. Therefore, a synonym for bolímbɔ́ is bɔ̌na ɔ̂ɛ́ bɔɛ́ko, "child of the decree, a child set apart, forbidden."

This ceremony may be held regardless of the child's age, at any time between three years and adolescence.

When the ceremony is ended the girl withdraws (-ulama, transitive -uja) into a hut specially prepared for this occasion, which is called ileke. Her seclusion lasts only a few months. When certain natural needs oblige her to leave the house, she goes out the back way through the banana grove and hides as much of herself as possible under a mat. She does not walk on the bare ground; her feet must not
● [285] touch the earth. That is why mats are spread everywhere she steps. She does no work; her food is prepared by her mother, sister, aunt, etc., or by a slave. When it comes to her toilette, she washes her hands not in water, but in palm oil. [32] All these practices are marks of respect and honor.

When the period of seclusion is ended, the girl's father gives a second feast, with dances, drinks, etc., and the bolímbɔ́ comes out walking on mats. But there is no further ceremony. From then on the girl is no different from other girls. But she retains the sign of her distinction, the wearing of furs, and she does no housework.

The marriage of a bolímbɔ́ always occurred very late, since a
[582] man who wanted to take her for his wife had to collect a good deal of
[558] wealth before he could take the risk of asking for her hand. Should his attempt prove fruitless, he was exposed to ridicule in the whole region.

Among the tribes living on the left bank of the Lulaka any
184 man who was rich and of good family could ask for the hand of a
556 bolímbɔ́ in marriage. Among the Injɔ́lɔ́, on the other hand, the re-
562 quirements were more complicated. The suitor had to belong to
582 another tribe or group. For instance, a girl who belonged to the

Rope-making

283 The Mongo rope-maker (one can hardly call him a professional rope-maker) goes to the forest, fetches fibers from a certain kind of palm-tree, scrapes them nicely with his knife, and puts them in the sun to dry.

Whole coils of rope are made in this way. Native rope, finished in this manner, is of a good, strong quality. Nets for the hunt and also for fishing are made of it. As in the case of weaving, it is something done by the men only.

IV. BASKET AND MAT WEAVING

285 462 The weaving of baskets and mats is chiefly the work of the women, especially the fine braidwork.

The men make only the large, roughly finished baskets needed for the transport of their copal. The braiding of mats is done only by the women.

285 314 From the forest they fetch the twigs of the Bolongote tree, scrape them nicely or dry them in the sun, and, sitting down, braid their baskets and mats.

They make different kinds of baskets, but the raw materials necessary for braiding are the bokombe or likombe of the Bolongote tree.

285 One or two women together braid the mats on the flat ground. The names of the mats are as follows.

[435] 1. Efonzolo, the roughly finished mat (value, five mitakos).

2. Nkongŏle, the finely braided mat (value, half a franc).

3. Itundŏ or lofole, the little mat with which the dirt from the road and the ashes from the fire are carried away.

4. Ifefa, the little mat used to fan the fire.

A. Th. Gutersohn,
Priest of St. Joseph's Congregation.
(Mill-Hill).

7:Brown M-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FO32 Mongo FO32
Ntomba

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Mantolo, the hat worn by the *nkumu* as the symbol of his office

[facing page 434]

7:Brown M-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FO32 Mongo FO32
Ntomba

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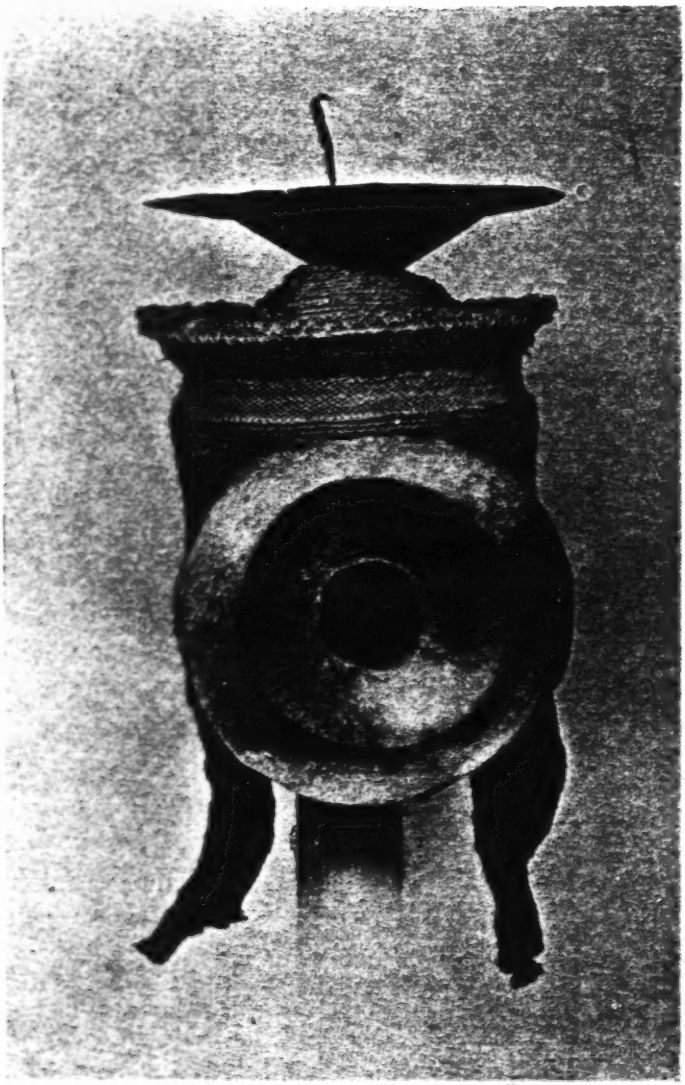

Mentsh, the hat worn by the *nkumu* as the symbol of his office

[facing page 435]